

Amendments to the claims

1. (Currently amended) A cafeteria tray accumulator system comprising: a drive track disposed in a looped path within a space between first and second spaced walls; the looped path having a pair of transverse legs offset in a vertical direction; both transverse legs being disposed within the space between the walls; the first and second walls defining loading and unloading windows; the loading window adapted to allow users to load cafeteria trays laden with dirty dishes into the accumulator system; the unloading window adapted to allow users to unload the cafeteria trays from the accumulator system into a dish wash room; the loading and unloading windows being offset from one another; a plurality of tray-holding cages connected to the drive track; each of the tray-holding cages adapted to hold a plurality of cafeteria trays; and a drive unit adapted to move the plurality of cages around the looped path of the drive track.
2. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the drive track is a monorail.
3. (Original) The system of claim 2, further comprising a counterbalance rail.
4. (Original) The system of claim 3, further comprising a support bar attached to the drive track for each tray-holding cage; the support engaging the counterbalance rail.
5. (Original) The system of claim 4, wherein each tray-holding cage is suspended from the support bar.
6. (Original) The system of claim 5, wherein each tray-holding cage is adapted to hold at least three trays.
7. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the transverse legs of the looped path are offset in a horizontal direction.

8. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the looped path turns around at least one right angle.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Original) The system of claim 8, wherein the right angle is vertical.

11. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the drive track is disposed in a vertical plane.

12-15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) A In combination, a building structure and a cafeteria tray accumulator system comprising: the building structure including a dining area and a dish washing area and first and second spaced walls; the first and second spaced walls defining a space between the walls; the first and second walls defining loading and unloading windows; the loading window disposed at the dining area and being adapted to allow users to load cafeteria trays into the accumulator system; the unloading window disposed at the dish washing area and being adapted to allow users to unload the cafeteria trays from the accumulator system; the loading and unloading windows being offset from one another; the cafeteria tray accumulator system including: a monorail drive track disposed in a looped path disposed within the space between the walls; the looped path having first and second transverse legs offset in a vertical direction; a plurality of tray-holding cages connected to the monorail; a counterbalance rail; each cage disposed intermediate the drive track and the counterbalance rail; each of the tray-holding cages engaging the counterbalance rail; each of the tray-holding cages adapted to hold a plurality of trays; and a drive unit adapted to move the plurality of cages around the looped path of the drive.

17. (Currently amended) The system combination of claim 16, wherein the looped path is disposed in a vertical plane.

18. (Currently amended) The system combination of claim 16, wherein the counterbalance rail is a monorail.

19. (Currently amended) The system combination of claim 18, wherein each of the monorails has a hollow tube section with rollers disposed inside the tube section.

20. (Currently amended) The system combination of claim 16, further comprising a self-supporting frame that carries the drive track and the counterbalance rail.

21. (New) A method of retrofitting a cafeteria tray accumulator system comprising the steps of:

removing an existing tray accumulator system from an existing space between first and second walls wherein the first and second walls define offset loading and unloading windows;

installing a new cafeteria tray accumulator system in the existing space without widening the existing space, the new cafeteria tray accumulator system having a monorail drive track disposed in a looped path disposed within the space between the walls; the looped path having first and second transverse legs offset in a vertical direction; a plurality of tray-holding cages connected to the monorail; a counterbalance rail; each cage disposed intermediate the drive track and the counterbalance rail; each of the tray-holding cages engaging the counterbalance rail; each of the tray-holding cages adapted to hold a plurality of trays; a drive unit adapted to move the plurality of cages around the looped path of the drive; and

locating a portion of the loop adjacent each of the loading and unloading windows.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising the installing a self-supporting frame that carries the drive track and the counterbalance rail within the space between the walls.